

## **The Green Berets and Army Rangers...Masion Laberge ....** **and the rest of the story.**

The U.S. Army's special operations forces—the Green Berets, The Rangers, and Delta Force – were deployed to the Middle East and have been renowned for their unconventional warfare in its many forms. They are trained for guerrilla war, sabotage, and subversion and skilled in raids, ambushes and seizures. As we celebrate Independence Day on this July 4<sup>th</sup>, I thought I would share with you how they originated and why are they important to the history of the Laberge family.

The French & Indian War was fought from 1754 to 1762 and many of the events and participants in that war led directly to the Declaration of Independence of July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776 that we celebrate today and the war that followed.

The French & Indian war was fought primarily along the frontiers separating New France from the British colonies from Virginia to Nova Scotia and began with a dispute over the confluence of the Allegheny and the Monongahela rivers, the site of present-day Pittsburgh. The dispute erupted into violence in the Battle of Jumonville Glen in May 1754, during which Virginia militiamen under the command of George Washington (then fighting for the British) ambushed a French patrol. In 1755 the British captured Fort Beauséjour on the border separating Nova Scotia from Acadia. Soon thereafter, the British did a mass deportation of the French Acadian inhabitants, many of whom later settled in New Orleans becoming the Cajuns that we refer to today.

In 1755, 1756 and 1757, the war was fought in Pennsylvania and New York with important battles around Lake Champlain, Crown Point, Ticonderoga and the upper Hudson. The most notable was the battle and surrender of Fort William Henry. The British lost the battle after which a formal dinner was held by French General Montcalm for the officers of both armies, after which the British were allowed to retreat with their weapons. That angered the Indians who had fought with the French and were used to scalping and pillaging their enemies after a victory, which they then proceed to do to the British as they retreated.

During these battles, the British with their red coats would line up in traditional fashion to fight the enemy. Suffering huge losses from the French and Indians, a company of colonial rangers led by Robert Rogers was rapidly expanded and fought with the British regulars and became the chief scouting unit. They were successful because of Rogers' unique unconventional warfare which included guerrilla war, sabotage and subversion (mentioned above) which he had learned living in the backwoods and from the Indians. He and his troops wore a green cap (beret) and clothes which made them distinct.

Being largely unsuccessful in Pennsylvania and New York, in July of 1758, the British laid siege by boat and took control of the French held Fort Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. Appointed by William Pitt as second in command, General Wolfe was seen as responsible for the great success and made commander of a force designated to sail up the Saint Lawrence River to capture Quebec.

In July of 1759, Wolfe along with 5 companies of Rogers' Rangers attacked Quebec City. In March, 1759, prior to the attack, Wolfe wrote:

If, by accident in the river, by the enemy's resistance, by sickness or slaughter in the army, or, from any other cause, we find that Quebec is not likely to fall into our hands (persevering however to the last

moment), I propose to set the town on fire with shells, to destroy the harvest, houses and cattle, both above and below, to send off as many Canadians as possible to Europe and to leave famine and desolation behind me; but we must teach these scoundrels to make war in a more gentleman like manner."

When Wolfe sailed up the Saint Lawrence, he initially attacked at Beauport, on the river just east of the city (now about a 5 minute drive from old town). Maison LaBerge is located about another 5 minute drive further east. That attack was repulsed by the Marquis de Montcalm (mentioned above.) The British who were parked on the Ile d'Orelans, then dispatched Rogers' Rangers to do their dirty work and proceed to burn all of the houses and farms from Beauport where they had attacked east along the north bank of the river. Maison LaBerge was one of the houses burned. It was subsequently rebuilt using the two stone chimneys which survived.

On September 13th, Wolfe did an end-around and attacked Quebec City from the west culminating with the 20 minute battle on the Plains of Abraham which the British won and both Wolfe and Montcalm were killed. The British later went on to take Montreal and end the war.

The battle of Quebec was lost in large part because Montcalm's plea for more troops from Louis XV were not met. The French West Indies were much more lucrative for the French and New France less important. Louis XV's also did not view the colonists in New France as true Frenchmen and worth the effort to save. The spirit of independence and survival of those who survived lives on today in the French speaking province of Quebec.

As a side note, Robert Rogers who returned to England, later asked George Washington if he could join the war for independence. He was refused under suspicion that he was a spy. Many of the Rangers did however side with and fight for the Americans during the revolution. The Ranger Handbook, written by Rogers is given to every soldier in the U.S. Army's Ranger School and is referred to in that publication as the originator of ranger tactics in the American military. The following military formations now claim descent from Rogers' Rangers:

- The Queen's York Rangers of the Canadian Army, formed from Loyalist veterans of Rogers' Rangers
- 1st Battalion 119<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery of the Michigan National Guard with members directly descended from the 30-strong detachment of Rogers' Rangers stationed at Fort Detroit
- U.S. Army Rangers who revived the traditions of Rogers' Rangers.
- The Green Berets were special forces formed in WWII from U.S. Army Rangers and Office of Strategic Services operatives. The green berets worn by them herald from Rogers' Rangers.
- The Texas Rangers, formed after the Civil war to control cattle rustlers and crime, take its "Ranger" name from Rogers' Rangers, and so too our baseball team.

So there you have it, the rest of the story.

Here are some links if you have further interest.

Rogers' Rangers: The First Green Berets

<http://www.amazon.com/Genesis-Rogers-Rangers-Revivals-1758-December/dp/0788415751>

Green Berets and Rangers: What's the Difference?

[http://www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/explainer/2001/09/green\\_berets\\_and\\_rangers\\_what\\_s\\_the\\_difference.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2001/09/green_berets_and_rangers_what_s_the_difference.html)

Forgotten War: The Struggle for North America DVD

<http://www.shoppbs.org/product/index.jsp?productId=12951997&cp=2809871.12997191&affiliateId=83316&camp=PJPBS- -text- -MountainLakeCATPAGE- -83316&clickId=420181490&parentPage=family>